

Message Text

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SUBJ: MANIFESTO ON CANAL TREATY NEGOTIATIONS

REF: PANAMA 0543

SUMMARY THE DELAY UNTIL JANUARY 26 IN THE PUBLICATION OF THE MANIFESTO CRITICAL OF GOP'S HANDLING OF THE CANAL TREATY NEGOTIATIONS WAS DUE TO PROBLEMS IN OBTAINING SIGNATURES, NOT TO SUPPRESSION BY GOP. THIS HAS BEEN CONFIRMED BY SOURCES LINKED TO "MANIFESTO MOVEMENT" AS WELL AS GOP. GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS REPORTEDLY BELIEVE THAT ANY ATTEMPT - OTHER THAN REBUTTAL IN THE MEDIA - TO SILENCE ITS CRITICS ON THE CANAL ISSUE WOULD STIMULATE SUSPICIONS THAT A "SELL-OUT" TO THE UNITED STATES IS UNDERWAY. EMBASSY CONTACT CLOSE TO GOP HAS URGED THAT U.S. DO ALL IT CAN TO MAINTAIN MOMENTUM OF NEGOTIATIONS IN ORDER TO MINIMIZE OPPORTUNITY FOR STRONG OPPOSITION TO DEVELOP. END SUMMARY.

1. THE MANIFESTO, CALLING FOR GREATER POLITICAL FREEDOM AND PUBLIC DEBATE ON A NEW CANAL TREATY, WHICH WAS PUBLISHED JANUARY 26 BUT DATED JANUARY 9, WAS DELAYED DUE TO PROBLEMS IN FINDING PERSONS TO SIGN IT, NOT AS A RESULT OF GOP PRESSURES TO PREVENT ITS PUBLICATIONS. THIS INFORMATION HAS BEEN CONFIRMED BY
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SOURCES CLOSE TO TOP GOP OFFICIALS AND BY PERSONS WITHIN THE

"MANIFESTO MOVEMENT."

2. A KEY LEADER OF THE "MANIFESTO MOVEMENT" IS REPORTEDLY RUBEN D CARLES, VICE PRESIDENT OF CHASE MANHATTAN BANK AND EX-MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE IN THE ROBLES GOVERNMENT. HE HAS BEEN CONSISTENTLY OUTSPOKEN IN HIS OPPOSITION TO THE GOP, CRITICIZING THE LACK OF TOTAL FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION. EXAMINATION OF LIST OF SIGNERS OF MANIFESTO, ALTHOUGH INCLUDING THE PRESENT PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF PRIVATE ENTERPRISE (CONEP), RICARDO CUCALON, AND SEVERAL OTHER MEN WHO HAVE BEEN OR ARE PROMINENT IN CONEP, REVEALS THAT FEW OF CONEP'S LEADERS OR LEADERS OF ORGANIZATIONS WHICH COMPOSE CONEP SIGNED THE DOCUMENT. MOREOVER, WE HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT CONEP INTENDS TO CONTINUE ITS EFFORTS TO SEEK SUPPORT IN THE U.S. FOR A TREATY ALONG THE LINES OF THE 8 TACK-KISSINGER PRINCIPLES.

3. ALTHOUGH SOME OF THE SIGNERS REPORTEDLY THINK THE GOP MAY MAKE SOME MOVE AGAINST THEM, EMBASSY SOURCE CLOSE TO TOP GOP LEADERS HAS TOLD US THAT GOP CANNOT SUPPRESS SUCH EXPRESSIONS OF VIEW ON CANAL TREATY NEGOTIATIONS NOR CAN IT TAKE REPRISALS AGAINST ITS OPPONENTS. TO DO SO WOULD PLAY DIRECTLY INTO THEIR HANDS BY ADDING CREDENCE TO RUMORS AND SUSPICIONS OF A "SELL-OUT." THEREFORE, GOP'S ONLY RECOURSE WILL BE TO REBUT CHARGES THROUGH PUBLIC MEDIA. AS PART OF THIS EFFORT AN ARTICLE APPEARED IN LA ESTRELLA JANUARY 30 BY PEDRO ZAMBRANO WILSON(THE PEN NAME USED BY FOREIGN MINISTER TACK). WILSON ASSERTED THAT THE "PEOPLE" WHO IN THE PAST ON "MANY OCCASIONS HAVE NOT BEEN CONSULTED.." WILL THIS TIME MAKE THE DECISION CONCERNING A NEW TREATY. HE CHARGED THAT THE "OLD LEADERS OR TRADITIONAL CAUDILLOS" REPRESENT ONLY PERSONAL INTERESTS OR "SECTIONAL ECONOMIC INTERESTS" AND THEREFORE HAVE NO RIGHT TO REPRESENT THE PEOPLE. WILSON EXPRESSED HIS CONFIDENCE THAT THE GOP WOULD IN DUE TIME TELL THE PEOPLE EVERYTHING RELEVANT CONCERNING THE NEGOTIATIONS. THE PEOPLE WOULD HAVE THE INFORMATION NECESSARY UPON WHICH TO BASE THEIR HISTORIC DECISION. THE PEOPLE SHOULD REJECT, HE WROTE, ALL EFFORTS TO MAKE THE NEGOTIATIONS A SUBJECT OF PARTIISAN POLITICS.

4. PANAMANIAN OFFICIALS ARE AWARE THAT THEY WILL BE SUBJECTED TO PRESSURE TO DISCLOSE THE SUBSTANCE OF TREATY NEGOTIATIONS, CONFIDENTIAL

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PARTICULARLY THE CONCESSIONS PANAMA IS PREPARED TO MAKE. SOURCE CLOSE TO GOP URGED THAT THE UNITED STATES NEGOTIATORS SEEK TO MAINTAIN MOMENTUM OF NEGOTIATIONS BECAUSE IF UNDUE DELAYS OCCUR, ULTRA-NATIONALISTIC HARDLINERS, JOINED BY TRADITIONAL OPPONENTS OF GOP, MAY SUCCEED IN MOBILIZING OPPOSITION TO GOP ON TREATY ISSUE, AND TORRIJOS MIGHT GET "COLD FEET" AND BEGIN BACKING AWAY FROM AGREEMENT. EMBOFF RESPONDED THAT U.S. NEGOTIATORS DESIRED TO MAINTAIN MOMENTUM AND HAD ALREADY MADE SUBSTANTIAL CONCESSIONS

IN ORDER TO DO JUST THIS AND PANAMANIAN NEGOTIATORS WOULD ALSO
HAVE TO CONTRIBUTE TO THIS PROCESS.

5. COMMENT. THE GOP'S SENSITIVITY TO ATTACKS ON ITS HANDLING
OF CANAL TREATY NEGOTIATIONS AND ESPECIALLY CONCERNING RUMORS OF
ITS CONCESSIONS HAS BEEN REVEALED IN ITS RESPONSE TO THE MANI-
FESTO. WE HAVE NOTED REPORTS THAT SOME GOP OFFICIALS HAVE
ADVISED TORRIJOS THAT HE SHOULD NOT RISK A PLEBISCITE ON THE
TREATY, BUT BELIEVE IT IMPROBABLE THAT HE WOULD BACK AWAY FROM
THE CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISION PROVIDING FOR TREATY'S
RATIFICATION BY THIS MEANS.

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